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STOLEN DAY - TAMMIN  
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A granite monadnock, brown and weathered as a whale shark. Its surface like an undiscovered asteroid mass hurtling through the black of space. Once there was a kilometre or more of ice pressing down here on all this granite country, scouring millimetre by millimetre across the stubborn grains of mica, feldspar and quartz that make up this most ancient of granites. Now the rock pools, shallow, littered with tourist thrown rock flakes, harbour only the most primitive ephemeral spring life forms. Ephemeral yet surviving here unchanged for hundreds of millions of years. After the winter pools dry up and drain by the end of spring, the crustaceans preserved in egg form, embedded in mud or dust, await the next break of drought. Larvae of sawfly or dragonfly twitch in the tepid water. Sluggish tadpoles, like giant flat spermatozoa, swish tails in the mud slurry. Soon they'll become frogs to fatten on the remaining pool life. Nothing wasted here! Then they'll burrow away, hide themselves in a secluded cave of mud to last through the nuclear blaze of summer.

A training jet fighter plane hammers across the rock. Dead centre - great navigation! Some day he'll centre on a target and press the climactic pulse of a firing mechanism. Do thoughts of kamikaze ever lurk in the primitive stem and cortex of his brain? Below the civilised saddle of the cerebellum?

Later we hear the whispering thunder of a passenger jet, too high for the naked eye. Maybe that pilot also glances to the salt lake-strung landscape below and this huge whaleback of brown rock. The passengers will be sipping drinks, turning the coloured leaves of inflight magazines, eyeing off hostesses, who are now called flight attendants.

Meanwhile, down on the rock we gaze at the bonsai roots of a kunzea bush that has inserted its lifeline into the finest of fissures and drawn up not only moisture for sustenance but also the colours it need to haemorrhage its bottlebrush-like crimson tufts. And other chemicals to make its sturdy green foliage.

In the cleft of the rock (almost a canyon), which water has worn in this monolith following Permian glaciation there is a fortunate but tiny forest of Christmas trees (*nuytsia floribunda*). Some are huge with bark crusty as pine trees, all corky and resistant to water loss for when the rock turns into a furnace. In this dense grove are

yellow flowering dryandras, called parrot bush by some. There are also sedges or reeds, sheoaks, kunzeas and melaleucas. Further away where the ground gets drier grow eucalypts — mallees, whitegums, blackbutts, salmon gums, gimlets. And there are acacias, mostly jam trees, and yet more casuarinas.

The rock face varies infinitely, although, from a distance, it has the dun brown smoothness of a bovine resting on its haunches. Up closer there are lengthy striations on the southern side as if registering the scour of the long-gone glacier.

Where the characteristic rock 'wave' has begun to form in the canyon on the north side there are prominent black brows over a sheer underhang. Across the surface of the great rock are patches of exfoliation. The smaller scurfy pieces have long since been scavenged by feckless tourists or eager school parties for hurling down the heights of the rock or shying into the small rock pools until they choke them. There are raised lines almost entirely made of quartz which ridge-back more weathered surfaces. Everywhere are lichens and mosses - green, black, grey - clinging on as they have done for aeons. They say only goats could graze away this persistent primitive life. But there are also the tussocky pincushions, tiny stubborn plants. In choked pools that are no longer pools grow exotic weeds blown from distant paddocks - blowfly grass, dandelions, stinkweeds, wild oats. These foreigners, the boat people of the plant world, have arrived even in this bleak, inhospitable place.

Further away from the rock, on the flatter swales there is eucalypt woodland merging into wheat paddocks. Everywhere here are monoliths in miniature of sandy-grey termite mounds. Perhaps these underline the folly of building towers to withstand, since busy echidnas or the odd rabbit have scratched at them, and tumbled them down.

As we drive out of the area along a gravel track we see the first bobtail skinks of the season, come out for a bit of warmth from this spring sun. On ridiculous skimpy legs they drag themselves painfully through the dust or curl up if cornered, hissing from gaping purple maws. They are the giant relative of the skink family yet one can imagine them rivalling komodo dragons or the gila monster back in the times of the dinosaurs.

The track opens on to a country road. Abandoned mudbrick buildings and an extensive grove of paranormal ancient aloes indicate where a farm once stood. The road runs on through salt-scoured paddocks, wild oats and mustard-weed rise head high on

the better-drained verges. The ribbons of salmon gums, blackbutts and jam trees arch over the road again as nearly all country roads once were before the 'progress' of powerlines and pipelines and reckless drivers brought full blaze of the invader sun to aid and abet the invaders from so-called western civilization.